

Economic Development Commission

Town of Bethel, Connecticut

*Bethel Municipal Center * 1 School Street * Bethel, Connecticut 06801*

(203)794-8540 Facsimile (203) 778-7520

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

4:00 P.M.

CJH MUNICIPAL CENTER-MEETING ROOM "A"

RECEIVED

2016 APR 22 A 3:36

TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

PRESENT- Michael Boyle, Chairman, Members: Kevin McMahon, Noel Gill, Roy Steiner, Bonnie Brown, Jay Streaman and Sharon Straiton.

Absent: Janice Chrzescijanek, Economic Development Director.

CALL TO ORDER- Michael Boyle called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT- NONE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES- Sharon Straiton made a motion to approve the minutes of February 17, 2016. The motion was seconded by Jay Streaman. Vote was taken, the motion was accepted.

ECONOMIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT- Chairman Boyle presented the Economic Directors Report in the absence of Janice Chrzescijanek. (See attached.) Chairman Boyle informed the commission of the process in which the new tenant of the old train station was selected. Out of 7 applicants 4 were of interest with the approval going to Lisa Tassone (LaZingara), Paul Mannion (Green Grunion) and Chris (Last Name?) Brew master as principals in a Micro-Brewery Restaurant. Chairman Boyle stated that this was a very difficult decision. Prior to the decision to select the Micro-Brewery, Director Chrzescijanek contacted surrounding areas with Micro-Breweries in their towns and was told

they are a home run in being a successful establishment, she was told Bethel would be crazy not to go with this proposal. 10-12 jobs will be created and property tax on equipment would profit the town. Obstacles will be parking. As part of the streetscape grant municipal parking signs will be installed. This decision by the Board of Selectmen will need to go to a public hearing. With the budget having passed the pavers on Greenwood Avenue will be repaired and trees replaced.

BETHEL FORWARD UPDATE- The final draft report is ready and a meeting will be held in the General Purpose Room in the Municipal Center on April 27, 2016 from 7-9 pm.

CLARKE BUSINESS PARK EXPANSION UPDATE- The expansion reports were sent to the State for review. The way finding signs are completed (see attached.) Roy Steiner inquired about a new Town Planner. Roy made a motion to send a letter to Planning and Zoning going on record concerning the illegal signs being placed at the park. Sharon Straiton seconded the motion. Vote taken, motion approved.

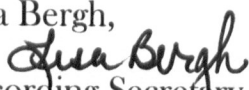
INVOICES- Roy Steiner made a motion to approve GeoInsight invoice # 47036 dated 02/26/2016 in the amount of \$16,735.31 for the property located at 7880 Trowbridge Drive, the motion was seconded by Noel Gill. Vote taken, motion approved.

ADJOURN- A motion to adjourn was made by Kevin McMahon; the motion was seconded by Bonnie Brown. Vote taken; motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Bergh,


Recording Secretary



OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street, Bethel, CT 06801

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Economic Development Update – March and April 2016

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- News-Times article on March 20, 2016 – “Plan to Change Downtown Bethel Takes Shape”

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Property and Business Owners

1. Personal Introductions - Total of 176 visits
2. Advisory Committees
 - Clarke Business Park Advisory Committee – Next meeting: May 27th at 9:15am

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Business Assistance

1. Business Assistance (relocation, financial, expansion, location, permit) – 162
 - Available Commercial Properties listed – 8 (-2), Available Sites listed – 5
2. New Businesses
 - **Mitchells Salon** (14 Grassy Plain), **Annie Nails** (14 Grassy Plain), **Note Kitchen & Bar** (227 Greenwood), **ARROW** (104 Wooster), **Superior Carting** (104 Wooster), **Oronoque Apothecary** (140 Greenwood), **UK Gourmet** (78 Stony Hill Rd. #2), **E.Liquid** (211 Greenwood))
3. **Old Bethel Train Station**
 - Lessee recommendation made to BOS by Old Train Station Committee.

Development Opportunities

1. **Bethel Forward**
 - Draft Master Report Presentation on April 27th – Flyer attached
2. **Clarke Business Park**
 - **Expansion** –
 - All reports have been sent to state for review. Awaiting notification.
 - Invoice – GeoInsight - \$16,735.31
 - **Wayfinding signage** – Review draft design - attached
3. **Downtown Revitalization/ Town Commercial Improvement Plan**
 - **Phase I** – Finalizing the design documents and then they will be sent to DOT for approval. Once they are approved they will go out to bid. Could take a few months. Downtown signs have been ordered.
 - **Phase II** – Applying for second round of Main Street Investment fund grant for continuation of Greenwood Avenue Streetscape.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Appeal

1. Maintenance of Streetscape

- Budget approved to fix the pavers and replace the missing trees downtown.

Plan to change downtown Bethel takes shape

By Nelson Oliveira Published 12:00 am, Sunday, March 20, 2016

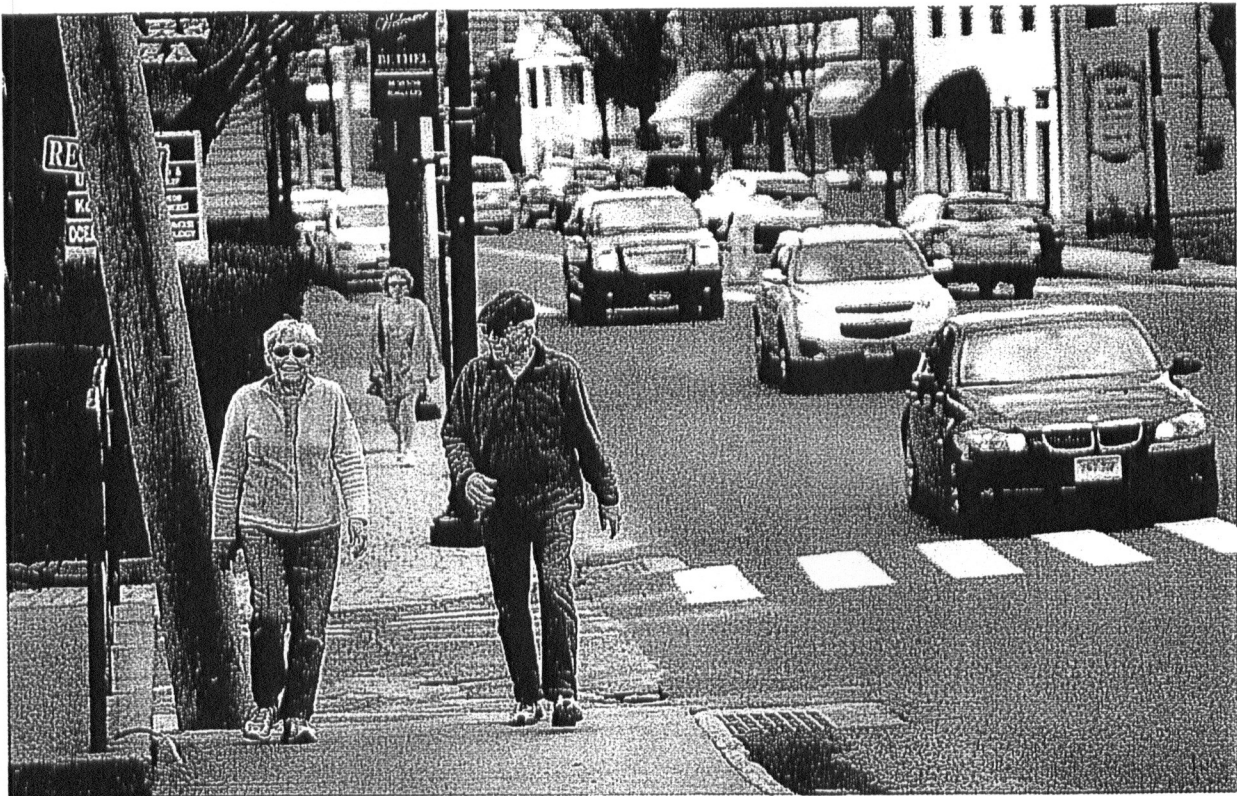
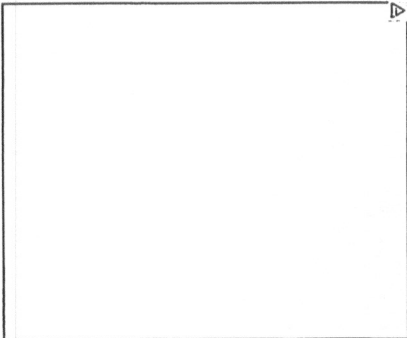


IMAGE 1 OF 6

Buy Pho

Betty and Don Campbell of Bethel take a walk on Greenwood Avenue in Bethel Thursday, March 17, 2016.



BETHEL — If the town follows the steps outlined in a redevelopment plan completed this month, Bethel's downtown will soon look much different and, officials and residents hope, more vibrant.

The 188-page master plan calls for creating new railroad crossings to connect the west and east sides of the train station, rezoning industrial parcels to allow new housing options, turning wetland areas into parks, reducing the speed limit in most of the area to 20 mph, building new roundabouts and seeking new types of businesses, among many other recommendations.

A key part of the plan, which an urban renewal firm completed earlier this month, is to rezone about 270 acres of property surrounding the train station into higher-density, mixed-use development. The area would become a transit-oriented district — a concept that has become increasingly popular around the country in recent years.

The project, dubbed Bethel Forward, seeks to ultimately re-energize the village center as "a distinctive healthy, vibrant, dynamic, pedestrian-friendly community" that is attractive to young professionals, middle-aged urban families and seniors, the master plan developed by DPZ Partners said.

The town's Economic Development Commission, which is leading the effort along with the Planning and Zoning Commission, used a state grant to hire the Miami-based company to design the project.

Janice Chrzescijanek, director of economic development, said the plan initially encompassed 133 acres of property, but it was doubled to include more of the business area.

The project calls for property owners to renovate their buildings and seek out independent and specialty stores that fill market "voids," such as furniture, groceries, beverages and clothing.

"It's important that we try to encourage a mix of retail downtown," Chrzescijanek said. "We're not going after coffee shops, pizza places or bookstores because we already have them. Our goal is to bring other businesses that will help support the existing businesses."

The document is the result of about eight years of planning and comes a few months after a series of community workshops were held at town hall last year. At those meetings, residents cited the number of empty storefronts on Greenwood Avenue, the lack of affordable housing and outdated conditions of some industrial properties near the train station as their main concerns.

Kevin Morton, co-owner of Paul Morton Jewelers, said a makeover would definitely draw more shoppers downtown.

"I think that's a great idea," he said. "Anything that brings people to town is great."

Alex Goralski, who takes the train to New York every morning, said he bought a house in Bethel three years ago because of housing prices and proximity to the train station, but he wishes trains ran more frequently.

"If you're going to try to make it a commuter town, there should be more trains," he said. "That would make it more appealing."

Goralski also said his 15-minute walk from Spring Hill Road is convenient, but he said more sidewalks would make the walk safer.

Don Campbell, who likes to walk downtown, agrees that Bethel already is pedestrian-friendly, but he sometimes worries about drivers.

"Some enforcement for the crosswalks and better signage would make it safer," he said. "Many, many times, cars don't stop, even when there's a sign in the middle of the road."

One of the key recommendations in the plan is creating at least two at-grade railroad crossings to improve access to the train station. Town Planner **Steve Palmer** said connecting Diamond Avenue and Grand Street to Durant Avenue is "the single biggest infrastructure improvement" laid out in the master plan.

"It's a critical connection that will help alleviate the bottleneck that exists on Greenwood Avenue," he said. "It would provide more convenient and direct access to the train station and a second entrance to the downtown."

Palmer also said the town has submitted a grant request to the state for about \$1 million to install new sidewalks on the west side of the tracks.

Residents will have a chance to watch a presentation on the Bethel Forward master plan on April 27 at the municipal center. Written comments, addressed to the **Land Use Department**, will also be accepted by mail or email.

After the presentation, officials could still change parts of the plan before the Planning and Zoning Commission adopts the document and incorporates it in the Plan of Conservation and Development. Once the document is adopted, public hearings will begin for each proposed zoning change and text amendments, Palmer said.

Bethel resident **Pete Neville** said he hopes the town creates more parking spaces to keep up with development.

"They're building everywhere," he said, "but there's no place for people to park."

The full plan can be viewed on the town's website, www.bethel-ct.gov.

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Francis J. Clarke Circle



Trowbridge Drive



Second Lane



Turnage Lane



36" x 60" x 1/2" PVC
with traffic grade reflective vinyl

